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idency." The latter is by no means the contribution that might well be expected from a veteran author of such broad experience in historical writing but it serves the purpose of drawing together the scattered narrative items into a synthetic whole.

ARTHUR C. COLE

*History and procedure of the house of representatives.* By De Alva Stanwood Alexander, A.M., LL.D. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin company, 1916. 435 p. \$2.00 net)

Mr. Alexander has written a book that is both useful and interesting. He has done more than present a technical account of the organization and rules of the house of representatives. He has also supplemented the formal facts with illustrative incidents and personal characteristics of speakers, floor leaders, and other prominent members of the house; and has presented this material in an attractive literary form.

The subject is treated in an analytical rather than a chronological arrangement; and the historical discussion appears in connection with each topic. This method has the effect of separating incidents closely related in time, and of taking up some recent events before others which serve to explain what came later.

In the chapter on the roll of members elect, the influence of the clerk of the former house over the organization of a new house with a close party division in 1839 and 1855 are set forth. The narrow margin in the present congress should arouse interest in these earlier contests.

A good deal of attention is naturally given to the power of the speaker and the rules of the house, including the exciting incidents connected with counting a quorum, the adoption of the "Reed rules," and the more recent changes. Mr. Alexander does not hesitate to express his approval of the changes brought about by Speaker Reed, in the interest of dispatching business; and while he admits that some of the more recent changes are useful or at most harmless, he considers the new methods of appointing committees a failure, and favors restoring this power to the speaker.

In taking this position, the author fails to recognize that the responsibility for directing the work of the house according to the wishes of the majority may be concentrated in the floor leader, without incurring the risk of unfair treatment to the minority when these powers were added to those of the presiding officer.

The disintegration of the control over finances by the distribution of authority among various committees is well told; and it is of interest to note that Mr. Reed aided actively in this movement some years before he took up the opposite task of centralizing control in the hands of the

speaker. But the committee system as a whole is inadequately presented. There is no discussion of the functions of committees, nor of their methods of procedure, nor of the system of subcommittees.

A chapter on the president and the house notes the increasing influence of the chief executive with some indications of distrust. The author evidently does not see in this another phase of the same tendency towards concentrating responsibility which he approves in the case of the speaker.

Nothing is said of the relations between the house and the senate, except in connection with impeachment proceedings. An interesting study might be made of the comparative influence of the two branches of congress, and the connection between effective leadership and the hegemony of one or the other house.

An appendix presents in tabular form the data as to apportionment, political divisions, presidents, speakers, clerks, and other officers, and the chairman of important standing committees.

JOHN A. FAIRLIE

*Principles of American state administration.* By John Mabry Mathews, Ph.D., assistant professor of political science, university of Illinois. (New York and London: D. Appleton and company, 1917. 534 p. \$2.50 net)

Until very recently the framework and functions of state government in this country have had surprisingly little attention at the hands of text writers. Books relating to the government of the nation we have had by the score, and during the last decade there has been no dearth of volumes relating to the various aspects of municipal administration; but the machinery, methods, and problems of state government have been almost wholly neglected. During the last twelvemonth, however, two noteworthy volumes have appeared in this field, both of them excellent in quality and both entitled to a genuine welcome from students of public affairs. One is Mr. Holcombe's *State government in the United States*; the other is Mr. Mathews' volume. These books are akin in that both deal with the same general subject and both are a credit to their respective authors. But there the parallel ends. If the two writers had prearranged to divide the field of statecraft between them they could hardly have better managed to keep from treading upon each other's ground. Mr. Holcombe has concerned himself with the foundations of state government, with the major organs of executive and legislative power, likewise with problems of governmental reorganization. Mr. Mathews, on the other hand, has given his special attention to the equally important task of showing what the various state departments have to do and what methods they pursue in doing it.